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The Schoolhouse Farthest West

ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND, ALASKA

Baby Margaret

Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church
156 Fifth Avenue, New York City, N. Y.

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The incidents and particulars of this story of school life in the far North were related at Seattle by Mr. V. C. Gambell, who with his young wife taught the Eskimo school at St. Lawrence Island for three years. Their fate was a melancholy one. After a visit to their home during the winter and spring of 1898, they, with their little daughter Margaret, started to return to their school, and sailed from Seattle on the schooner *Jane Grey*. Off Cape Flattery a heavy gale was encountered, during which the schooner sprung a leak, and sank within a few minutes. Thirty-two of the passengers, including Mr. and Mrs. Gambell and baby Margaret, perished. The Eskimo pupils of these brave teachers looked in vain for them to reappear. While they were in Alaska, they had many strange and dangerous experiences. Mr. Gambell's narrative was substantially as follows:

UPON St. Lawrence Island, in the Bering Sea, stands the schoolhouse which, of all those over which the American flag flies, is farthest west. There is a school at Point Barrow, in the Arctic Ocean, which is farther north, but the one on St. Lawrence Island is the farthest over toward Siberia, to the northwest.

St. Lawrence Island lies almost within the Arctic Circle, at the southerly entrance to Bering Straits. Nothing larger than tundra grass, lichens and a few low willows grow on its bleak, copper-covered hills and frozen marshes. Formerly there were three Eskimo villages, but in 1888-9, many of the natives died of starvation. It is said that they had sold all they possessed to smugglers in exchange for liquor. Now there is one village of three hundred and fifty souls, at the western end of the island. The people lived almost wholly by hunting the walrus.

The lumber for the first schoolhouse was shipped from San Francisco, in 1891; and a strong, plain structure, forty feet in length by twenty in width, was built by the carpenters of the ship that brought it, on the outskirts of the native village, at a cost of exactly one thousand dollars.

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Mrs. Gambell and I were carried to the island by the United States revenue steamer *Bear,* and landed September 15, 1894. By way of introducing us, Captain Healy announced to the people through an interpreter that we were two white teachers who would live at the schoolhouse and teach the children to "make book-talk." He added a warning that they must treat us well.

Nevertheless, we were not without misgiving when set ashore among these strange-looking people, and reflected that after the *Bear* left we would be alone with

The Revenue Steamer "Bear"

them for a year, cut off from all communication with the outside world, and entirely at their mercy. What might not happen to us in that time? My wife cried a little for loneliness as the *Bear* steamed away.

A year's supply of flour, meat, hard biscuit and canned goods had been landed for us and put in the schoolhouse, one-half of which was partitioned off as our private room. Coal, too, had been landed for our fuel, as there is no wood on the island except driftwood, probably from the Anadir and the Yukon River.

On first landing, we knew hardly a word of the native language, a very difficult one. I wish the Eskimos

had been equally ignorant! As we stepped ashore, they greeted us with boisterous laughter. They stood with their hands on their hips, literally shaking with what seemed merriment, and ejaculating a chorus of *yeh-yeh-yehs!* Their greasy, flat faces, pug noses and broad mouths added to the appearance of hilarity. The native garb made their thick-set figures seem still more squat; and most of the men might have been taken for fat friars, since nearly all had the crowns of their heads rudely shaven. If their laughter was disconcerting, what shall I call their language?

Their few English words, picked up from whalemen and smugglers, were mostly terrible oaths, and still more revolting expressions. As they crowded forward laughing, they poured forth a torrent of this awful language. Of course, they did not in the least comprehend what it signified to us, and later we learned that all this was only their way of making us welcome. But you can imagine how shocked we were, and with what haste I conducted my wife to the school building.

Hardly had we shut the door before about forty wolfish dogs came about the house, where they barked and howled for hours. At length I made a large whip with a stick and a piece of rope, and at last drove them yelping away.

But the dogs were nothing to the shamans, or sorcerers. That night three of them kindled a ring of fires on the beach, and held a seance. As I walked past the place and saw the "doctors" lying on the ground within the ring, muttering incantations, a hunter, named Koogak, came after me and good-naturedly warned me, by signs, not to look at the fire lest the "spirits" should enter my body. As we had been warned that the shamans are always jealous of white teachers, we were somewhat afraid of them, and altogether it was a "blue" night for us.

The next day we arranged our small supply of furniture. Having no servant, we were obliged to cook for ourselves. I found a spring of water at a distance, and afterward dug a kind of well. Ice had already begun to form at night. I calked the walls of the house, banked it, and made ready generally for the long, terrible winter.

After this, for six weeks, we, the teachers, were obliged to be pupils and learn the native names of things. As the dialect of these Mahlemiuts differs somewhat from that of other Eskimos in Alaska, what I had previously learned helped me but little.

The people of this island—who are all one large family, much related, which has lived here for many generations—were now leaving their summer tents and moving into their igloos, or winter houses, which are largely underground, and are entered through a short tunnel. These habitations were much warmer than the schoolhouse.

The first of these winter houses to which I took my wife "to call," was that of Koogak, the hunter, who lived near us and had five children. He had come voluntarily to help me in banking my house and putting up the school-bell, and we had become well acquainted. After creeping through the entrance-way, which was no more than four feet high, we found ourselves in a circular space, which had low bunks about the greater part of it, and in the center of which a large oil lamp was burning.

Koogak, the Hunter

Koogak's wife had just brought in from their outer storehouse a piece of fat, raw walrus flesh, as large as a ham from which she was

cutting small chunks and feeding two little girls—quaint, chunky infants, who on catching sight of me, hid behind some skins hung up around the walls. A boy whom they called Moosu (Bubby) rushed forward and shook hands with Mrs. Gambell, somewhat to her astonishment. He had learned that shaking hands is the American mode of greeting, and wished to be polite.

The mother laughed much and repeated over and over again her few English words. Soon another boy came in whose name his father told us was Heezy-Cry. For a long time we could not guess what name was meant, and my wife was much shocked on learning that Heezy-Cry was their pronunciation of the name of the Saviour. I mention this to show that they attached as little meaning to sacred words as to oaths.

Another near neighbor was Neewak. He lived in a large house with two shamans, called Toolluk and Aabwook, and had no other family. These "medicine-men" claimed that they had, two months before, saved Neewak's life. According to the code prevailing there his life was therefore theirs, and he must work to support them. It was as if a family physician, after curing a patient of fever, should come to his house to board for the rest of his life. If the patient refused to settle, the "doctor" would bewitch him, "steal his heart" and fill him with evil spirits. The shamans are all great rascals, and like some other rascals in other countries, they contrive to live on the fat of the land.

Calling on our Mahlemiut neighbors would have been more agreeable if the odors inside their igloos had been less terrible; my wife could endure them for but a short time, and had little relish for her supper after a visit to one of them.

It was not until the first of November, when the days had grown very short, that we felt sure we knew words enough to open school and begin teaching. I told

Koogak that we would "make books talk" the next day at the schoolhouse, and that all the children must come when I rang the bell. He at once went as my messenger to all the houses in the neighborhood and spread the news.

My wife was so much excited the next morning that she could hardly prepare our breakfast. At ten I began ringing the bell, and with the first stroke we heard a mighty confused shouting. All were coming on the run —not only the children, but their parents, men and women, old and young, the women bringing their babies in their hoods, and all hurrying, as if to secure choice seats! Every one was shouting with laughter. Never before did teachers see such a race to reach the schoolhouse. At least twenty dogs, each one barking madly, were coming, too.

Mrs. Gambell turned pale. "What do they mean?" she exclaimed. "What are the old ones coming for? Are they going to kill us?"

"Don't you hear them laugh?" I said.

"They would laugh at anything," she replied.

I opened the outside door of the schoolroom, and in they all came, over two hundred of them, pell-mell, and six or seven dogs besides.

As the schoolroom was only twenty-five feet long by twenty feet wide, they packed it as full as a sardine-box. We could hardly stir inside. For a while I did not know what to do. The noise and the odors were unspeakable; and, worst of all, men, women and boys were repeating all their store of shocking English words, by way of showing their knowledge. Imagine, if you can, the scene inside that room! I do not believe that any two teachers ever before had such a gathering of pupils.

"Oh, what shall we do?" my wife said to me, almost crying. "What shall we do with them?"

"Oh, we shall manage all right," I replied. "But we must get rid of the dogs." For these curs were barking and snapping at each other.

I then spoke to Koogak, and told him that it was necessary that the room should be quiet, that the dogs must be put out, and that the people must all sit down. Koogak instantly bawled out the orders; and the next moment those dogs went out, heels over head. Some were kicked out, some were flung out bodily over the heads of the throng.

Then the people, still laughing, began to sit down. Some sat on the school seats, some on the top of the desks, some on the floor and some on each other. Mrs. Gambell and myself were crowded close against the blackboard and remained standing. One old shaman was almost touching me with his greasy head; and a woman with a fat baby peeping over her shoulders was so nearly under my feet that I dared not step.

But it was the best-tempered crowd I ever faced. Their broad smiles were something never to be forgotten. Koogak had bidden them all hold their tongues, and they were trying hard to keep still, but looked ready to burst into a roar. Numbers of babies were gurgling and chuckling.

I felt we must do something to catch their attention, so I asked Mrs. Gambell, who is clever at sketching, to take a piece of chalk and draw a walrus on the blackboard behind us. She did so in some trepidation, but so well that before she had added the tail-flippers I saw a gleam of recognition in the faces around us.

When I pointed and asked, "What is that?" there was a shout of "*Aabwook!*" and they all—men, women and children—kept repeating the word until Koogak had to tell them to hold their tongues.

When silence prevailed again, I said, "Yes, *aab-*

wook;" and Mrs. Gambell then printed that word in English letters.

I then said, *"Aabwook,* English *walrus;"* and Mrs. Gambell then printed that word beside the first. I then pronounced it three or four times and singling out first one, then another, beginning with Koogak, bade each repeat it after me. They did so with great gusto, but their Eskimo tongues made a bad job of walrus—it was *volvus* and *olvus* and *wolwus,* and I know not what else. I kept them at the word, however, particularly the boys, till each one could pronounce it passably well. This was not accomplished without prodigious contortions of their thick lips.

Then I had Moosu stand on a box at the board and print the words, which, with Mrs. Gambell showing him how and guiding his fingers somewhat, he did pretty well. To see Moosu print "book talk" pleased them all very much; they seemed to think he was on the high road to erudition, and even the old shaman grinned frightfully. All sat breathlessly watching the printing, but when Mrs. Gambell rubbed it out they laughed uproariously. To see the words disappear was to them very funny.

After walrus we took up, in the same way, *oomiak,* meaning boat; *pussy,* meaning seal; *parka,* meaning coat, and ten other words. That was the first day's lesson, and gave us two hours of the hardest work. At the end of that time the state of the small room, packed so full of these uncleanly people, was such that an intermission was highly desirable.

We had but one session that day, but that was enough to rob my wife of all appetite for dinner. But in undertaking to teach and civilize barbarous people, one must not be squeamish. It is no holiday task. If one is not sustained by a high purpose he will soon be very homesick.

On the next day not quite so many came, and we began to get to work in a more orderly manner. I felt sure that the old people would soon go about the ordinary business of their lives, and so, indeed, it happened. But the young folk continued to come with considerable regularity.

At first hardly any of the girls came. The little Eskimo girls of St. Lawrence Island are the most timid, bashful creatures that can be imagined; they skulk and hide like hares. And, by the way, there is little in the native dress to distinguish boys from girls, and for a while we could hardly tell them apart. Soon my wife inquired into the non-attendance of the girls, and learned that they were afraid, both of me and of the larger boys.

At last she persuaded Mrs. Koogak to bring her two little daughters to the schoolhouse one afternoon, after the usual pupils had been dismissed, and then set to work in kindergarten ways to interest and reassure the chubby tots. Others were afterward brought, and in the course of a week Mrs. Gambell had collected seventeen girls for a kind of evening school, beginning at three o'clock every afternoon.

The sun now rose a little before ten o'clock in the morning, and set before two in the afternoon. When the weather was cloudy we had to keep a lamp constantly burning. Even on fair days it was dark at three o'clock in the afternoon. On the afternoon of December fifth, an adventure befell Mrs. Gambell and her class of girls.

A thick *poorga,* or snow-storm, had whirled down upon us the day before from the north; a foot of snow had fallen, and great drifts nearly buried the village and blocked up the windows of the schoolhouse. Ice-floes, packing against the coast, pressed great masses ashore

in hummocks twenty or thirty feet in height. The entire sea, across to Siberia, was covered with ice.

Most of the boys came early to school despite the storm, and in the afternoon two of the Eskimo women wallowed through the drifts to bring their little girls. I dismissed the boys for the day, when I saw my neighbor, Koogak, hastening past the schoolhouse with his gun. He told me he was going to hunt a white bear which had come ashore from the ice not far from the

They Heard a Kind of Scratching Noise

village, and had dug into a *cache* of meat belonging to the Noosik family.

Muffling myself in my fur coat and hood, and snatching up my gun, I went along with him to see the sport. Although the snow was flying so fiercely that one could hardly see an object ten yards away, we were joined by fourteen or fifteen others. We found the bear's tracks several times, but soon lost them again among the ice hummocks to which the animal had retired.

We went for a while into Shuglawina's house, to warm ourselves and to turn out the dogs, after which we again went forth and spent an hour or more hunting among the hummocks. We found no bear, however, for the best of reasons. The bear was now at the other

end of the village, and my wife was having all the "sport" at the schoolhouse.

The storm was so severe that only five of the girls had come at three o'clock. The lamp was set on the teacher's desk, and Mrs. Gambell had the girls about her there. Suddenly they heard a kind of scratching noise, and a glass pane of the window at the other end of the schoolroom was broken inward, and the pieces rattled on the floor. They looked up and saw the nose of some large creature there, sticking in at the hole.

Mrs. Gambell declares she did not scream, but undoubtedly she, as well as the little girls, was much startled. Two of her pupils hid themselves under the desk, but Tummasok, a girl between thirteen and fourteen years old, seized the iron rod with which we poked the coal fire and ran resolutely forward to repulse the beast. But before she could reach the window the bear withdrew its nose, and immediately afterward they heard it on the other side of the house, trying to dig under the sill, near where our provisions were stored. Mrs. Gambell locked the door and then listened.

The beast, not succeeding in digging under the house, ran several times around the schoolhouse, probably in quest of food. Soon it returned to the window and again thrust its nose in at the hole till the sharp edges of the glass cut it—as we discovered afterward. Tummasok struck at it and broke a second pane. Mrs. Gambell, venturing forward also, pulled down the curtain.

The bear again ran around the house and began digging near the door. Their greatest fear, however, was lest the animal should burst through the window.

Bethinking herself that wild animals are said to be afraid of fire, my wife took the lamp in one hand and an old newspaper in the other, and approaching the window, posted herself there to await the bear's return.

She did not have long to wait; the bear soon came back to snuff at the broken glass. Thereupon my wife set fire to the paper, threw the curtain up, and let the paper flame up in front of the glass. Although Tummasok nearly put out the blaze by whacking away at the bear's face with the poker, it probably disconcerted the creature and drove him off. At any rate, when I returned, fifteen or twenty minutes later, and tried to open the door, there was no bear about.

My wife and her pupils heard me trying to get in, and Tummasok, thinking that I was the bear returning, whacked hard with the poker upon the inside of the door to scare it away. When I spoke, they cried out for joy, and made haste to let me in. About an hour later Neewak shot a polar bear, as large as a cow, near his house. The two shamans had heard it digging into their *cache* of meat just outside the door. The animal had three or four little cuts in its nose, in which were a bit or two of broken glass. It was the same one which had frightened my wife.

During the first week we could hardly tell our small Eskimo pupils apart; their black heads and round, flat faces seemed as much alike as so many peas in a pod. But in intelligence they differed as much as white children do.

By the tenth of December the men and women stopped coming to school as pupils, but continued to drop in at odd times to look on. We had over fifty young people who came with fair regularity. It was impossible to learn their ages. Eskimo parents seldom remember the age of a child who is more than three years old. When asked when their children were born, they would reply, "*A-pan-ee*"—Long ago. The boys were all the way from five to twenty years old.

The girls were so shy, and at first so much afraid of me, that my wife taught them by themselves; but as

they gained confidence, we gave them seats in the schoolroom, and had but one session.

Imagine, if you can, how the fifty-five young Eskimos looked in the schoolroom, on those dark winter days when a lamp had nearly always to be kept burning. On the right-hand side, in the front row, facing the teacher's desk, sat Angeit, a boy about thirteen years old, as we supposed. Angeit signifies the "catcher," or "snatcher," and it was an appropriate name for the lad—I shall have to confess privately that Mrs. Gambell called him "Swipes."

He was inclined at first to pocket everything he could lay hands on. We taught him better; but still it would have been wrong to expose him to much temptation. He had a very round head, small black eyes and a wide mouth, and he wore over his fur jacket a kind of jumper made of a flour-sack that had the name of the brand in big letters on the back of it. He was proud of this jumper, and the others envied him its possession.

Next to him was Sipsu, supposed to be fifteen. Sipsu is the handsomest boy in the school, and all too well aware of it. Those who suppose that a Mahlemiut boy would have little to be vain of should see "Sip" admire himself in Mrs. Gambell's hand-mirror. A few years hence he will be the dandy of the village, no doubt.

At the desk next his was Kannakut, whom the other boys call "Hennay," or "girl-boy," because nearly every day he carried his little sister, Seenatah, to school on his back. She is too young to come to school, but I think that her mother wishes to get her out of the way, and so compels Kannakut, who seems fond of the child, to bring her with him.

To keep her still in school-time, he gives her little chunks of walrus fat, of which her mouth is usually full. This queer little creature bit my wife's finger quite severely the first time she approached her, to poor Kan-

nakut's unbounded regret. Kannakut has a good, kind heart. He learned to read easy English in two months; and he can now add, subtract and multiply as well as many white boys. He knows the multiplication table up to the elevens.

At Kannakut's left sat another boy, named Poosay, whom Mrs. Gambell, who often sees the humorous side of things, calls "Pussy"—for many long, stiff hairs grow

In the Front Row Was Mozart

about his mouth, and give him a truly catlike appearance.

Behind Poosay sat Toodlamuk, who has two of the longest, whitest eye-teeth I ever saw projecting from the mouth of a human being! Even when his mouth is closed, they visibly project and give him a dangerous look. But we have never heard of his biting any one, and he is a bright pupil.

In the front row was a boy whom Mrs. Gambell named Mozart, he was so hopelesly addicted to humming a tune in school. He appeared to do it unconsciously. One particular bar or refrain which he was constantly

crooning was, to our surprise, much like a call which boys whistle in the United States. He also knew a part of "Solomon Levi," which Captain Healy, of the revenue cutter *Bear,* had taught him, and all of "Yankee Doodle."

Our "noisy boy" was called Tattarat. He was one of the clattering, thumping sort of boys who are always dropping things, and bumping their heads against the desk when they pick them up. He is our only really ragged boy. Mrs. Gambell calls him "Tatters," and has grown weary of patching him up; he has the kind of elbows which will come through any sleeves.

There was Nossabok, too, the boy who persisted in bringing his pet cat to school, for fear the dogs would kill it if he left it at home. This cat was brought from the Aleutian Islands, and was, so far as I know, the only one in the village. It had very thick yellow fur, and its body was as round as a log.

The "belle" of the school was Pingassuk, a girl about fourteen years old, and she is really rather pretty, for she is much less chubby and greasy than most of her companions. She came to school at first wearing yellow moccasins and a suit—*parka,* hood and trousers—of white seal fur. Even her little mittens are white. She has pretty dark eyes and long lashes. Her complexion is so clear that a pink flush often shows on her cheek. In her thick braids of hair are stuck pink shell ornaments, and her smiles are emphasized by two queer little streaks of ochre at each corner of her mouth. "Pin" holds all the boys in immense disdain; and they hardly venture to steal a glance at her.

At the same desk with "Pin" was seated poor little Kolleluk, who lost a foot from freezing, several winters ago; she hops and hobbles about with the aid of a kind of cane made from the rib of a whale. During the first term of school Kolleluk learned to read fairly well from the First Reader.

At the desk behind "Kollie" sat a very odd-looking child, who has a pink face and white hair—one of those freaks of nature which occur among human beings as well as among other animals, and which are called albinos. From some superstitious notion, her parents dress her in black fur, which contrasts strongly with her white hair. Her name is Okiakuta, which my wife has abbreviated to "O. K."

Near to "O. K." sat Esanetuk, whose appearance always threatened our gravity till we came to know what a good, common-sense little girl she is. One of her cheeks, the left one, is vastly larger than the other, which gives her face a curiously one-sided aspect. Esanetuk prints beautifully with the chalk crayon, and also draws, after a queer, homely fashion of her own. My wife is very fond of her.

Near her sat Tukeliketa, whose face always shone like a freshly fried doughnut. She was the greasiest child I ever saw; in Biblical language, her little hard braids of hair might be said to "drop fatness." Her book, soaked with grease, would have burned like a candle-wick. It took Mrs. Gambell most of the winter to teach Tukeliketa—the name means "butterfly"—to use soap and abjure grease externally.

Another little girl, who put my wife to much trouble, was called Coogidlore. She seemed to be affected with constitutional drowsiness. It was nearly impossible to keep her awake in school hours. We would hear a little "purring" sound, and that would be Coogidlore asleep at her desk. The first time she came I heard the noise, and thought it was the purring of Nossabok's cat. Very soon she rolled off her seat to the floor beneath the desk. Mrs. Gambell roused her and set her to study, but within five minutes she was sound asleep again.

Most of the girls, as I have said before, were very bashful; and Annevik, who sought a seat in the extreme

dark corner, was painfully so. This child lived in a very agony of shyness. If I glanced in her direction, she would cringe and hide her face. For several weeks she wore her little parka of blue fox fur hindside before, in order to have the hood in front to hide her face in.

Little enough like Annevik was Topeta-tu, whom Mrs. Gambell called "Topsy." Her Eskimo mother had arrayed her in a kind of gown made of cotton print, with large yellow sunflowers on it. This tremendous innovation in "style" had been obtained from a whaling vessel which had once anchored in the bay. Mrs. Gambell laughed till the tears came when Topsy first appeared at school in that ludicrous gown. Her hair was tightly braided in nine little rattails at various angles; her little eyes twinkled with merriment; her thick lips were usually wide apart, showing a row of broad white teeth. Topsy was quick to learn, but forgot everything by the next day. For a long time she seemed to us to have no memory whatever.

Behind Topsy sat a good, strong girl, named Tummasok, who was supposed to be thirteen years old. This was the girl who struck the white bear's nose with the iron poker; and she was, I think, our most typical Mahlemiut girl. After the tenth of December Tummasok rarely failed to appear at the schoolhouse, and always wore sealskin boots and a white fox parka and hood. Her stepfather was known to be very cruel to her, but this she constantly denied when my wife questioned her.

In December, when the days were at their shortest, the sun showed for barely three hours above the horizon, and was so low in the south that it afforded little warmth. During stormy weather the light was very faint, and the people in their dark houses did not always bestir themselves in the morning. Kannakut and Tummasok usually came to the schoolhouse by ten o'clock; but many of the

others would sleep over a day, unless I went to rouse them. They appeared to be dormant, like hibernating animals.

At length, I made a practice of setting off at nine o'clock every morning, with my lantern and schoolroom bell, to arouse and summon our pupils. I would ring the bell in front of each house till signs of life were shown.

But with all this, they often failed to come to school until my wife invented a novel kind of reward of merit. She made dozens of crumpy little "cookies," and gave one to each pupil who reached the schoolhouse at ten. These were a great success.

The fact is that these poor children were now going hungry, and that is one reason why they did not like to stir forth in the cold. "Poorga" had followed "poorga," and these snow gales had so packed the ice about St. Lawrence Island that neither seal nor walrus appeared at sea. The hunters could find nothing. Even fishing was impracticable.

At the schoolhouse we had a year's supply of food and fuel, and by making everything snug, contrived to keep comfortable; but almost before we were aware, the natives were on the brink of starvation. We looked over our provisions, and found we could spare a dozen cans of baked beans to give our pupils a dinner after school. It was pitiful to see them eat, all the more so as nearly all of them tried hard not to appear greedy.

As I was dealing out the hot beans to them I noticed that they regarded the bright labels on the cans curiously, and therefore I gave Kannakut, Poosay, Tummasok and six or seven others each an empty can. To our surprise, they at once stopped eating and put their beans back into the cans. When we asked them why they did so, Poosay replied that they wished to take the beans home to their families, who were as hungry as they. Would white children be more thoughtful or self-denying than this?

During the latter part of January these poor villagers boiled and ate all the walrus hide which they possessed as well as the skins of their summer tents, and even their dog harnesses and whips. Our pupils now often looked blue and pinched, and we gave them every morsel of food that we dared spare.

While school was in session one day, about twelve o'clock, we heard shouts throughout the village. The men appeared to be hastening to and fro. A great crack had opened in the ice-fields, some three miles at sea. The open water was a mile or more in length and several hundred feet wide. In and about the borders of it were many seals, several walruses, and a dead whale, frozen in the ice.

Naturally every hunter of this starving hamlet desired to reach the crack with his harpoon and gun as soon as possible. The first comers were likely to fare best. Our big boys were expected to go, yet they sat waiting hungrily until I gave them permission. Twenty-one of them bowed most respectfully and walked out of the room as orderly as soldiers; but you should have seen them run once they were outside!

The younger children sat listening eagerly to every sound outside; and finding their attention so completely distracted, I closed school early and let them all go. In fact, my wife and I were greatly interested in the hunt, so much depended on it.

The weather was cloudy and the sky very dark, with a rising, sighing wind. When I left the schoolhouse all but the old women and young children had gone away across the ice-fields. I took my own gun and started to follow them. The trail of the hunters was easily discernible in the snow among the hummocks.

I had gone no more than a mile when I met my neighbor, Koogak, his wife and their two boys coming back to the village, loaded down with seal meat. Mrs.

Koogak was carrying a most incredible load. When she set the mass down to rest, I attempted to lift it, but could not raise it from the ice—at which her broad mouth expanded in a tremendous smile. In addition to her load she was dragging the carcass of a seal after her by a thong.

This family had among them no less than a thousand pounds of seal meat, and their faces were broad with smiles. When an Eskimo has made a good hunt his cup of joy is full, and he takes little thought for the future. "To-morrow is another day," he says.

Koogak, thoughtful for my safety, urged me to go back to the island, putting up his hand to show me that the wind had changed and was beginning to blow hard. When I started to go on, he set down his load and followed me, still insisting that I should return with them to the land.

The wisdom of Koogak's advice was soon apparent. It perhaps saved my life. We had not reached the island before the most frightful noises issued from the ice all about us. The great hummocks were cracking asunder with frightful crashes that boomed far along the coast. The change of wind was starting the great ice-fields away from the island; and where the hummocks were frozen to the shore, there was a fearful rending and grinding. For a few minutes we were in great peril among the splitting floes, but at last jumped to land.

The dusk of a stormy evening had settled on the village, and most of the people were still away on the ice-fields, which were now in motion, near and far, the black water of the exposed sea seething and foaming up in the opening cracks. In the fast gathering darkness we saw men and women at a distance, loaded with seal meat, all hurrying to escape being carried out to sea, for the ice, under pressure of the strong wind, was moving away from the shore. The noise was like continuous

Her Broad Mouth Expanded in a Most Tremendous Smile

thunder; and already a driving gale of snow was setting in. It seemed to me that all who had not reached the shore must be crushed or drowned.

As I stood straining my eyes in the gloom and snow, my wife ran down to the shore, sobbing as if heart-broken. She had heard the crashing of the ice and feared that I was lost. The thought of being left alone there must have been terrible to her.

The people farthest out, when they saw that the ice-field had left the shore, turned and ran for the cape, a mile farther to the west. The ice-field was turning and doubling about this headland and remained jammed against it for an hour or more, so that all the villagers got ashore there, except five. These were cut off by a great crack which suddenly appeared between them and the land. Among those were Kannakut and Angeit, who had started on the hunt behind the others, and had gone farther along the crack, in pursuit of a walrus. We heard them shouting dolefully, far off in the storm. It was pitiful to think that we could do nothing. The ice was mostly afloat now, and it had grown very dark.

The Mahlemiuts who had escaped said little. They are hardened to accidents of this kind. Many turned away stolidly and went home with their packs of meat.

Thinking that the unfortunates might be helped if enabled to keep their bearings on the ice, I lighted my best oil-lantern and hoisted it to the top of the flagstaff on the schoolhouse. Mrs. Gambell, too, began tolling the large school bell, which was hung on the roof. Heard in the storm of that wild, sad night, the strokes were most melancholy. After a time I begged her to desist; for I believed that she was fatiguing herself needlessly, and that the bell could do no good.

"Oh, but it may cheer them," she said. "And it is all I can do for them!"

After every five minutes she resumed the task and

continued it through the long, mournful night. At times I relieved her; but she did most of the ringing, and sat watching our little clock during the intervals of silence.

At daylight nothing could be discerned out at sea, save a waste of stormy water and white ice-cakes. But as the light increased, we saw that a large "field" had grounded, three or four miles to the eastward; and within an hour Kannakut and three of the others came plodding wearily to the village. They had succeeded in getting ashore at daylight, but were badly frost-bitten, and had come near to perishing.

Angeit,—poor little Swipes!—while trying to jump across a crack had slipped and fallen in. If he rose at all, he probably came up under the ice.

Almost the first words of those who returned were about the bell which they had heard all night. The lantern they had seen but once or twice, owing to the storm. But the bell had cheered them greatly. To use Kannakut's own words: "It made our hearts strong."

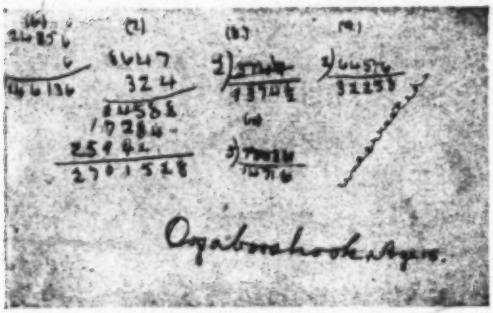
Certain prominent educators objected to the plan to establish schools among the Eskimos of northern Alaska; they said that the attempt would fail and prove a waste of money. They believed that the Eskimos could make no use of education and could not acquire it, for lack of memory and application. They declared the Eskimos are improvident and thoughtless and incapable of anything better than barbarous poverty.

It is easy for professors of ethnology to advance such theories, but I think it better to judge by the facts gathered from actual experience in an Eskimo schoolroom.

At our school on St. Lawrence Island we have Eskimo boys of fifteen and sixteen, who, after only two years of schooling, can read the English of the Second Reader with considerable fluency, and who have advanced in arithmetic as far as decimal fractions. They

can add, subtract, multiply and divide with a fair degree of accuracy. In fact, the average Eskimo boy is a good natural mathematician. Those boys are often quicker in reckoning than white boys at home.

As far as I can discern, they remember from day to day, from week to week, and from the first winter of school to the next winter as well as any other boys. Some things they forget, but so do all boys. Indeed it is a mistake to suppose that because these boys are Eskimos, they are not very much like other boys, the world over. To change Burns's immortal line a little, "A boy's a boy for a' that," wherever you find him. The difference is developed later in life, and is caused by different habits and different modes of living.



The Eskimo Boy Is a Good Natural Mathematician

As to the other objection, namely, that an education will do an Eskimo no good, it is, like the first, founded on theory instead of on fact. The education which we are giving the boys and girls of this village is doing great good already, for it has led the boys to reject the odious superstitions with which the shamans, or sorcerers, contrive to hold the natives in a state of slavish terror.

My older boys now laugh at the threats which the shamans make, and ridicule their antics. With one generation of free schools shamanism in Alaska will die out, and no one who has not lived in an Eskimo village can understand what a curse it is, and what abominable crimes are committed by the sorcerers.

The shamans were the only persons at St. Lawrence

Island of whom we were really afraid. Should any disaster happen or any epidemic occur, these scowling old rascals would be sure to pretend that it was due to our presence, and so to work on the superstition of the natives that they would be led to murder us.

Two shamans had quartered themselves on a hunter, named Neewak, who lived only a few hundred yards from the schoolhouse; and if they had been two man-eating crocodiles, Mrs. Gambell could not have been more afraid of them.

One of them, Aabwook, frequently lurked about our house after dark. Time and again, on opening the outer door suddenly, I came upon him, listening there, or would catch a glimpse of him stealing away in the darkness. What he was doing or what he wanted was a vexatious mystery; but owing to our well-nigh defenceless condition, I thought it prudent not to resent his espionage. Yet all the while we were well aware that both he and Toolluk would do us mischief if they could; and had they not been afraid that Captain Healy, of the cutter *Bear,* would inquire into it and hang them, I make little doubt they would have had us killed.

From the very nature of things, there can be no truce between free schools and the sorcerers. The schools spread useful knowledge; the shamans thrive on ignorance and superstition. When ignorance goes their occupation will go, too, as they well know.

Like the priests of all false religions, the Eskimo shamans are not wholly hypocrites. They believe to some extent in the spirits and demons which they pretend to invoke. But they are cheats in most of the practices with which they frighten the people.

Old Toolluk and Aabwook were at once laughable and terrifying. At first, they came to school with the others, to look on and watch us; for they regarded us as rival white sorcerers. If we possessed new "charms"

or "tricks of the trade," they hoped to find them out for their own use.

The desire to learn our methods was probably the chief reason why Aabwook played the Paul Pry about our doors and windows. He also tried to "bewitch" us, use the power of the evil eye, and make incantations which would cause the Eskimo demons to enter our house. Moreover, he was a cunning thief—a regular old fox. A book would hardly suffice to contain all the irritating, odious experiences which we had with this unspeakable old knave.

A shed and other outbuildings adjoining the schoolhouse were built for us the second year, in which to store our season's provisions, fuel and so forth. They were placed at the end of our apartment and offered fine lurking-places for the shamans.

There were no windows in the store-shed—a strong structure of planks—and but one door, that from our kitchen, opened into it. No one could enter it save through our room doors; and no native, so far as we knew, had done so. But one morning in January, my wife, who was getting the breakfast, while I went through the village with my bell to wake our pupils, discovered on the floor of the shed, just in front of the threshold of the door from the kitchen, a cabalistic mark. It was a rude, oblong figure, in dull red, with little crosses at the corner, and a grinning visage at the center. It was the work of one of the shamans, and they believe, or at least say, that if a person steps across one of these signs unsuspectingly a disease-demon will enter his body.

In some excitement as well as indignation my wife called my attention to it, as soon as I returned. I could not refrain from laughing, yet I felt mystified and uncomfortable. We had not the least doubt who had placed it there; but how he had contrived to do so was what puzzled us.

"Now how in the world did the old torment get in?" was Mrs. Gambell's first question. We examined the walls of the shed, the roof and the floor. Every plank was nailed fast. When both of us were in the schoolroom we always kept our outer door bolted, and so we were sure that he could not have slipped in covertly. In fact, we were mystified, and my wife shed tears of vexation.

Mr. Gambell

"Oh, dear!" she lamented. "To think that we can have nothing and do nothing without being intruded on and spied upon by this malicious wretch! It is horrible!"

I sought to laugh over it and ridicule the shaman, but the thing rendered me more uneasy than I liked to confess. At night I lay awake for hours, listening for sounds in the shed. A few days later, following a severe snowstorm, I was prostrated for two days by a bad cold. It was not prudent for me to leave the house, or even to go into the schoolroom, and as I lay looking out of the window during the few hours of daylight, I had for encouragement on my sick-bed the sight of Aabwook walking up and down before the house waving his arms to and fro and muttering strange imprecations—to stimulate the disease-demon which he believed he had summoned into my body.

His behavior tortured my wife so much that she fell ill of a cold herself. While taking care of her, I noticed that Toolluk had joined Aabwook in his perambulations outside our door.

As long as the short daylight lasted, I could see them going up and down, muttering, groaning and swinging their arms. Whether they kept up their incantations all night, I do not know, for I was too anxious about my wife and too nearly ill myself to watch them after dark.

The next day they were there again, and it became well-nigh maddening to see them pass. It was disheartening enough to be ill in a heathen land, three thousand miles from a physician; but to watch those two sorcerers, in their efforts to render our illness a mortal one, was far more depressing. Their malevolent antics at last worked on my nerves to such an extent that I was hardly able to restrain myself from going forth with a club and assaulting them.

Despite the "demons," we were both feeling quite well again by the fifth day; and when the shamans appeared, we opened the door and triumphed over them by bidding them a most smiling good morning! Never have I seen a keener spasm of disgust pass over the human countenance than that which puckered old Aabwook's leering visage at sight of our apparent good health. They had expected to find us at our last gasp. It is difficult to preserve a Christian spirit toward those who hate you so, and seek in every way to bring about your death.

Unfortunately our own attack of influenza was followed by several cases among our pupils; and from what is known of the disease, I had little doubt that they took it from us. The shamans were not slow to go about, declaring that the "spirits" were angry on account of the presence of the white teachers in the village, and that the children were bewitched from handling the school-books, slates, chalk and so forth. Eleven pupils ceased to come to the schoolhouse. In these circumstances I deemed it best to give more thought to curing

than to teaching the others. Fortunately, we had medicines and also disinfectants.

Our first step was to disinfect the schoolroom thoroughly, at night after school, by keeping it full of brimstone fumes for several hours. We also made use of chlorides.

Several of the families were reluctant to have us visit the sick children, or to have them take our medicines, but I insisted on administering quinine, with the result that all save one recovered in the course of a few days, and showed prodigious appetites. Then, contrary to the advice and threats of the shamans, eight of the absentees returned to school. Naturally the spite of the sorcerers against us increased.

During the last week of February Toolluk caused the death of one of our pupils, a little boy six years old. The child was ill; the shamans told its parents that the white sorcerers had bewitched it, and that it must be exposed out-of-doors at night. They obeyed, and the poor little fellow soon died, whereupon Toolluk, no doubt, said that our sorcery had been too strong to be overcome.

Not long after this I was made aware that Aabwook had gained access to our storehouse again. Three dozen cans of beef, not to mention other supplies, had disappeared. This time I discovered how he had got in. Adjoining the storehouse at its far end was a very small lean-to. The thievish shaman had dug a hole through a deep snow-drift at the back to the sill, and then tunnelled under this, and so come up inside.

At first, I said nothing of my discovery to my wife; but I asked Kannakut, one of my oldest, most trustworthy pupils, to make an errand to Neewak's house, where Aabwook had quartered himself, and report to me whether any of my beef-cans were about the igloo. Kannakut informed me the next day that he had seen

both shamans eating the beef. Now, among the Eskimos, stealing from a neighbor's *cache* of food is deemed the meanest of crimes.

I determined to surprise Aabwook if he crept into our storehouse again and hold him up to public scorn. In the lean-to I placed a heavy stick of wood in such a way that, if pulled a little, it would fall against and tightly close the door into the storeroom. Then to the stick I attached a clothes-line which I led along the ceiling and over the doors into the kitchen. It was a good, if rough, trap. My plan was to watch for Aabwook, and when he entered cut off his retreat by making fast the lean-to door behind him. That done, I meant to keep him a prisoner, until I could summon the entire village to witness his discomfiture.

My wife was so filled with curiosity concerning the stick and line that I was obliged to take her into my confidence. She at once exclaimed that merely to expose the villain was not the half or the quarter of his deserts. The natives were so much afraid of him, she said, that he would go unpunished. "And I want to see him punished?" she exclaimed with energy.

Mrs. Gambell has a kindly, generous heart and is very charitable; but this shaman had so outraged all decency toward us, and persecuted us so long that her patience was gone. She was filled with anxiety, too, lest in removing Aabwook from the storehouse, he might stab or otherwise injure me.

"Even a scratch from his dirty old nails might poison any one!" she declared; and in fact the old rascal did look poisonous. "He ought to be fumigated! He ought to be disinfected! If we can entrap him, let's smoke him with the sulphur kettle!"

Such a thing may appear ridiculous, but we knew that the sorcerers were afraid of the white man's "medicine," and so we concocted a plan for fumigating Aab-

wook. There was a small trap-door in the floor of our kitchen, under which I had previously had a coal-bin and where there was space enough to creep along under the floor of the storehouse. I cut a hole in the storehouse floor at a point where it would be concealed behind the tiers of goods boxes, and placed the sulphur kettle there, well charged and so arranged that when the sulphur was fired the fumes would rise directly through the hole.

My vigils by night were fruitless, however. Aabwook did not appear, although we soon found that more of our provisions had been taken. At length we discovered that the pilferer crept in toward the end of school hours, after it had grown dark, while Mrs. Gambell and I were busy with the singing exercise.

Finally, I made a little hole in the kitchen door, and placed Kannakut there to listen. I confided to him what I suspected, and instructed him how to pull the line. The result was that on the second afternoon Kannakut entrapped the shaman, and came in haste to inform me of his success.

Bidding our pupils remain seated, I hurried to the kitchen. There was a great noise inside the storehouse, at the lean-to door.

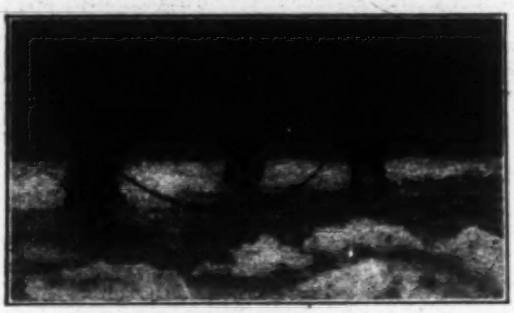
"Aabwook!" I shouted at the hole in the door, using the Eskimo tongue. "The white man's 'charm' has caught you!" . . .

The noise I made brought Mrs. Gambell hurrying forth, and after her came all our pupils. Meantime, with Kannakut's assistance, I pinioned him securely with the clothes line. While we were thus occupied an alarm had gone forth. As many as a hundred natives came to the schoolhouse.

Aabwook lay in the snow, still blinking somewhat hazily; four meat-cans had dropped from the pouch of his *parka,* and I improved the occasion to relate what

he had done to us, and also what the white man's "medicine" had done to him. I bade them all look at him well and observe that he was a sneak-thief and a cheat.

The men would have laid hands on him if I had given the word; but I said, "Let him go home," and cast him loose. He sneaked away followed by the hoots of those of the younger generation. I cannot say what vengeance he may be planning for the future, but he has kept away from the schoolhouse from that day to this.



We Had Our Sports, Too

After the successful issue of our long struggle with the shamans, or medicine-men, school went on smoothly for many months, and we became so much interested in the progress of our pupils that the time passed pleasantly. Several of our boys and girls, particularly Sipsu, Tummasok, "Mozart" and Esanetuk, proved to have good voices; and as a cabinet organ had been sent us from home, musical exercises now formed a pleasant part of each day's session.

We had our sports, too. There are two little lakes at no great distance inland from the village, and both in the autumn and in the spring my wife and I occasionally went with our pupils on skating excursions. During the winter, when the days were clear and calm, or when there was bright moonlight, we sometimes went up to the hills to coast. The great ice hummock which formed along the shore also afforded steep, slippery inclines where there was much merry sliding.

Later, in the spring and summer, during the school vacation, we attempted several longer excursions into

the interior of the island, and ascended the Yellow Hills, whence on either side the ocean can be seen. There are no trees here—nothing but "wild wheat," white-plumed tundra grass, and about the ponds and pools a few creeping willows. Red and copper-colored lichens cover all the rocks and crags of the hills. Thousands of ducks and other aquatic birds nest about the lagoons and on the shores of the ponds and lakes. When I had the time I went out shooting; but at this season one must always wear a net and keep hands and ankles well protected, as clouds of mosquitoes and gnats assail the hunter with unheard-of ferocity.

On the whole, our Eskimo neighbors were by no means bad people to live among. All except the four shamans were well disposed to us, and often showed their good-will by neighborly services. Many of them were proud of the progress of their children and were grateful for the pains we took.

During the second and third winters my wife and I often spoke of what a peaceable village it was, and how few quarrels and altercations occurred. Indeed, the tribe was like one large, harmonious family. Uniform kindness and good humor seemed to be the rule of life. The supply of food was sufficient in these years, and everybody seemed quite content.

Wherein, do you suppose, lay the secret of such marked good-fellowship and peace, and why was this hamlet of semi-savage Mahlemiuts, wholly unprovided with police courts, lawyers, or laws of any sort, more peaceful than any civilized village in our own country? It was because no intoxicants could be procured. There were none on the island. Happy the community where alcohol is unknown!

Nine years before our arrival at the island a trading vessel had sold to the natives a brand of vile whiskey in large quantities. In exchange for it the Mahlemiuts

had given nearly everything they possessed. Drunken orgies were constant, and during the ensuing winter nine-tenths of the population perished from starvation and disease. The struggle of the Eskimo for existence in his severe clime is at best a hard one. Intoxicants mean ruin and death for him. Since then, the survivors of that tragic winter had not even seen liquor; and gradually the island was becoming repopulated.

But this "golden age" was fated not to continue. One evening we heard an unusual shouting at the far end of the village. Twice my wife went to the door to listen. "I don't see what it can be about," she said, uneasily.

"One of their *tuvik* games, probably," I replied. "They often raise a great shout when a player makes a good cast."

'No; but this doesn't sound good-natured," she objected. "It sounds like some drunken man."

I laughed,—it seemed so unlikely,—and said that possibly one of the shamans was making a "medicine" powwow over some one who had eaten too much walrus fat.

"It doesn't sound like that, either," she rejoined.

We resumed our reading and troubled ourselves no further about the matter; but several times afterward that evening, and once in the night, I fancied that I heard the shouting.

The next morning, before school-time, while yet it was dark, Esanetuk and her little sister, Poona, came to our door, looking very cold and miserable. They had been crying, and Esanetuk had a livid bruise on the side of her face. We took them in and gave them breakfast. Tattarat also came to the schoolhouse at about the same time, looking equally woebegone.

At first, both he and Esanetuk were reluctant to tell us why they had come so early and in such plight. But

after they were warmed and fed, the older girl told my wife that her mother had beaten them and turned them out of the house early in the evening; and that they had been out-of-doors all night. "Tatters" also told me much the same story.

When we asked them what they had done and why their parents had beaten them, they at first made no answer, and we thought they had been doing wrong. At length, Tatters muttered something about "gun-water"—using two native words, signifying a gun and water. Nothing more was said; but when the other pupils came to school, they were all somewhat excited and talked a great deal about gun-water. I took Kannakut aside and asked him what had happened at Esanetuk's house.

He replied that Hoonakia was there, and that she was "cooking gun-water;" that as many as fifteen other natives had gone to the house the night before to taste it; and that the uproar we had heard came from the people at the house, who had danced, sung, shouted and fought during the greater part of the night.

Hoonakia was a disreputable native woman from Cape Prince of Wales, or else Point Hope, on the mainland of Alaska. Three weeks before a whaler, in passing down from the Arctic, had set her ashore on St. Lawrence Island.

A foreboding of evil fell on us, and after school was dismissed that afternoon, my wife and I went home with Esanetuk—ostensibly to call.

At the entrance of the igloo we met Keevalik and Nusmoa, two young hunters, coming forth boisterously; and above the other odors of the low passageway, I only too certainly detected the sickish smell of alcohol. If I had felt any doubt, however, it would have been quickly dispelled when we pushed aside the bearskin curtain.

Esanetuk's father, mother and five or six other

natives lay on the floor drunk. Two women, who were nodding sleepily, squatted on the floor in the far corner. But what most interested us was the woman who sat beside the large, whale-fat cooking-lamp in the middle of the igloo and tended the flame. This woman was Hoonakia. Suspended over the lamp was a large, sheet-iron can, the contents of which were boiling and simmering with a singing noise. To the nose of the can was affixed a rude kind of gooseneck, contrived from a large, hollow bone; and from this the barrel of a gun projected to one side, passing through a kind of pan which Hoonakia was heaping up with bits of ice. At the far end of the gun-barrel, on the other side of the pan of ice, was set a little copper kettle, into which dripped a tiny stream of liquor.

Hoonakia's broad, greasy face expanded in an unctuous smile. She was partly intoxicated herself, yet she was not so drunk that she could not attend to the still—for that was what the rude contrivance amounted to.

"Yeh, yeh, yeh!" she cried, pointing to a great basket, set near her, stuffed full of furs, skin *parkas,* mittens, moccasins, and so forth, which she had obtained in exchange for her liquor. Then, laughing uproariously all the while, she summoned the imperfect English she had picked up from the whalemen, and said to me, "You come buy? You want me glet you dlunk?'

"Oh, the dreadful creature!" my wife murmured, hopelessly.

"All dlunk!" Hoonakia continued, pointing gleefully to the prostrated natives about the floor, and then, patting her basket of furs, she said: "Me glet good *kimo,"* which meant she was driving good bargains.

I approached to examine the still, and Hoonakia, laughing all the time, explained its workings with great pride.

Her method was to mix about five quarts of mo-

lasses and three of wheat flour in five gallons of water, and allow it to ferment in the warm hut. The large can, containing the "brew," was then placed over a cooking-lamp and boiled. The vapor from the boiling mess was driven up through the bone gooseneck and into the gun-barrel, which served as the "worm." In the gun-barrel, it was condensed by the constant exterior application of ice, so that there dripped out of the priming-hole end of the barrel as fiery and mischievous a liquor as was ever distilled by a Tennessee "Moonshiner."

We went home much depressed. There was, indeed, cause for uneasiness. During the next three weeks the village was in an uproar night and day. One woman was beaten nearly to death in a brawl. A man had been stabbed and a girl, named Taskekia, had disappeared; no one knew where she had gone.

It is almost needless to say that the school suffered. Our pupils often failed to attend; and when they appeared they were hungry or ill from exposure. At times intoxicated women and men would come to the schoolhouse to take away their children, and would berate and sometimes beat them. Altogether, the change in the village was most lamentable. Many of the men had altogether ceased to hunt, and had even exchanged their walrus lances and guns for liquor.

With crafty forethought Hoonakia had traded for every sack of wheat flour and all the molasses which the natives had obtained from trading vessels during the summer. In two weeks she became the richest person in the village. The igloo where she had set up her still was a magazine of native goods. She was the living embodiment of the liquor traffic. Thrift, peace and harmony had departed from the island. The hunters were giving themselves over to drunkenness. They began to gamble, and fights followed. Never before had I been

made to see so clearly the folly of allowing savages free access to liquor.

For a while, we well-nigh despaired of the success of the school. The older people began to be morose and hostile toward us. The children grew apathetic and careless; they stopped singing the school songs. Those were dark days.

One evening in January Mrs. Gambell had what she deemed an inspiration. "I'm going to reform that Hoonakia!" she said to me. "I'm going to make a Christian of her. If I can only convert her, we may stop that dreadful still!"

The next day she went alone to call on the woman, and invited her to come to our house. That evening she came, arrayed in all the native finery which she had acquired.

We invited her to dinner, and opened several cans of fruit for her delectation. Mrs. Gambell also made her several small presents, such as women prize. During the next fortnight Hoonakia was a constant visitor at the schoolhouse, and became a regular boarder at our table.

Having secured the woman's confidence, my wife by degrees instilled into her mind the doctrines of a better life. I think it was during the last week of January that we first spoke to her of the evils of drunkenness. Thus far we had not mentioned the subject; but having made a beginning that evening, we both took her in hand, and labored earnestly to have her see the evil which she was doing with the still.

Somewhat to our surprise, she saw the evil of her ways at once, or seemed to do so. When Mrs. Gambell described to her how little Poona and Esanetuk came to school, bruised, cold and hungry, she shed tears. Never had missionary a truer penitent; and when we asked her to give up the still, she not only said she would, but actually went to the igloo where she lived and brought

the contrivance to the schoolhouse for me to crush to bits—as I did with great satisfaction.

Mrs. Gambell's joy was perfect. "First win the hearts of people," she said to me that night. "The rest follows. This is the way to do good in the world."

We kept Hoonakia at the schoolhouse, doing what we could for her comfort, for two days. On the afternoon of the second day, during school hours, she stole off, and for a week we could learn nothing of her. A drunken brawl at the igloo of Nassamok, a hunter, was the first hint which we obtained as to her whereabouts. There she had set up another still.

Mrs. Gambell

Mrs. Gambell's disappointment was painful to see. She sought out the woman, and found her much the worse for partaking of her own stock in trade, but at length persuaded her to return to the schoolhouse, and after a day of earnest persuasion reformed her again. This time her repentance seemed genuine. Weeping great tears, she brought the new still to me to destroy, and promised never to make another.

Again we established her at the schoolhouse, resolved to watch over her kindly, and succeeded in keeping her there for four days, when she slipped away at dead of night, and when next we heard from her she was running a new still "full blast" at the worst place in the village!

Not growing weary in well-doing, my wife went to

Hoonakia once more, but with less hope than at first, I fear, and by the exercise of sisterly kindness, converted her for the third time from the error of her ways. A relapse ensued on the fourth day, however. The same thing happened again, and when Hoonakia brought her fourth still to me, I suggested that she should also bring all that remained of her stock of wheat flour and molasses. This she did, in all honesty, for there was no doubt of the genuineness of Hoonakia's change of heart—while it lasted.

The difficulty with her lay in the fact that, as Mrs. Gambell said, there was "nothing to her—no conscience, no intellect, just a few weak little emotions and a vicious appetite." Alas, that such characters are not confined to savage life!

I broke the fourth gooseneck, threw the gun-barrel into a snow-bank and crushed the old oil-can with the pole of the kitchen axe; and that done, I placed the flour-sacks and the three large skinfuls of molasses in our storehouse.

By this time I was only too well aware that there would be no lasting reform in that village as long as Hoonakia could secure materials for making whiskey; and I was at a loss what I ought to do with the flour and molasses. That night, after school, I asked my faithful boy, Kannakut, to go to walk down to the beach with me. He now spoke English with a fair degree of fluency.

"Kannakut," I said, "what do you think of Hoonakia?"

He is a reserved, self-respecting boy, and hesitated before replying. "If a whale-ship comes, by and by, I hope she will go away," he said, at length.

"You think that the gun-water is bad, then?" I asked, by way of sounding his opinion.

"I think it is very bad," he replied. This indeed, was the sentiment among all the boys and girls at the

school. We had made the evils that come from intoxicants plain to them; and of late they had not lacked for sad examples of the truth of our teachings.

After it had grown dark we returned, and I showed Kannakut the wheat flour sacks and the molasses in the storehouse. "Do you think that Hoonakia and those who like gun-water will try to get it?" I asked him.

Kannakut nodded. "It is all there is," he said. "By and by, when they want drink, they will come to get it and make fight."

"You think that it would be better if they did not find it?" I asked.

The boy's eyes searched my face. He nodded, and an odd smile flitted across his sedate countenance.

"Kannakut," I said, "Mrs. Gambell and I will be in the schoolroom this evening, setting copies. But the outer door of the house and the door leading into the storeroom will not be bolted to-night. I should be glad if the molasses and wheat flour were not to be found there to-morrow morning."

Again the boy's eyes met mine for an instant with a gleam of intelligence. I saw that he fully understood the situation.

Twice, about eight that evening, I fancied that I heard a slight noise in our kitchen, adjoining the schoolroom. It was so slight, however, that neither Mrs. Gambell nor the penitent Hoonakia noticed it. On glancing into the storeroom the next morning, I found that the flour and molasses had disappeared.

Kannakut, his face as sedate as ever, was at school as usual the next day. He burdened me with no confidences concerning what had occurred. Kannakut is a wise boy in his way.

What followed may be of interest to those who study social evils. In the small hours of the succeeding night I was awakened by hearing Hoonakia astir in our kitch-

en. She covertly entered the storeroom in search of her materials for distillation. Not finding them there she returned to her bed, but I heard her moving about several times afterward. The thirst for gun-water had returned, and her repentance had vanished.

The next day at about noon, without warning, she flew into a violent rage, assaulted my wife, and cursing frightfully in both Eskimo and English, finally left the house. Late that night she returned with three or four of the men who had shown a fondness for gun-water, and demanded the flour and molasses. I admitted them into the storeroom to see for themselves that it was not there; then I turned them out and bade them begone.

They were searching for a week, afterward, for the missing staples, and a tremendous uneasiness manifested itself throughout the village. But Kannakut had performed his part of the task so well that the quest proved a bootless one. When at last they had all satisfied themselves that no more gun-water was possible that year, quiet was restored. The men resumed hunting, and the village settled to its former peaceable and good-humored life.

Mrs. Gambell believes that she has reclaimed Hoonakia—for the fifth time. But when the *Bear* returns to us in July, I shall do what I can to have this versatile lady carried back to her former home, at Point Hope. She knows quite too much about the distilling business.

When the *Bear* returned, the two teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Gambell with their little daughter, came home to the United States for a visit, and as was mentioned at the beginning, were drowned while on their way back to St. Lawrence Island.

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